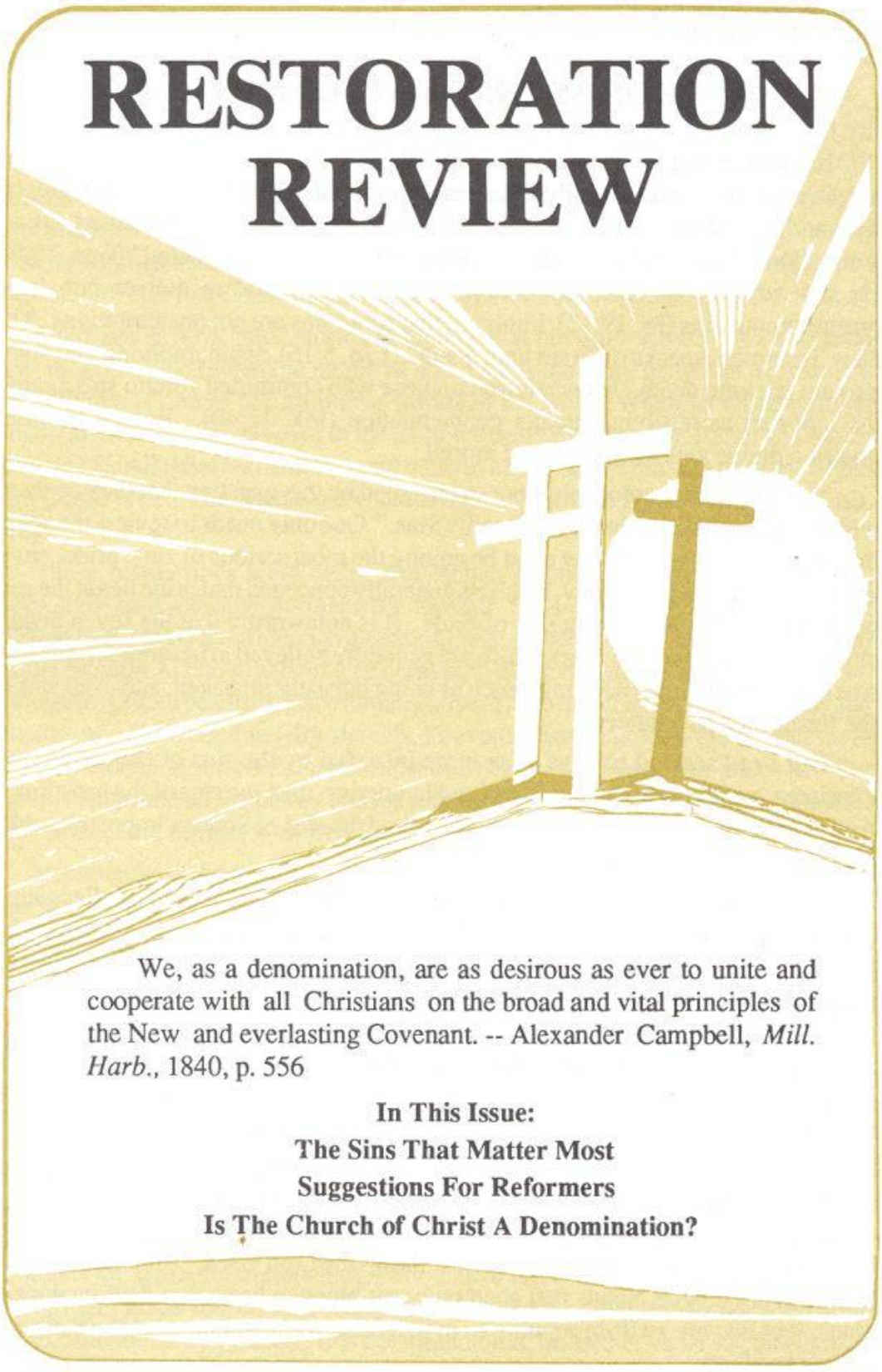
RESTORATION REVIEW



We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and cooperate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant. -- Alexander Campbell, *Mill. Harb.*, 1840, p. 556

In This Issue:

The Sins That Matter Most

Suggestions For Reformers

Is The Church of Christ A Denomination?

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . .No. 13

THE SINS THAT MATTER MOST

It is proper that we be concerned about the sins that matter most. While all sins are sins, all sins are not equally grievous to God. There are lesser sins and greater sins, and at least one that is described as unpardonable. Joseph lamented amidst temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God" (Gen. 39:9). He saw adultery as especially sinful. David asked God to deliver him from presumptuous sins (Ps. 19:13), implying that some sins are not presumptuous. The New Testament speaks of "a sin unto death" (1 Jn. 5:16), again implying that some sins are not unto death. Jesus referred to those who committed certain sins against the innocent as receiving greater condemnation (Mk. 12:40). Roman Catholic doctrine divide sins into venal and mortal.

The medieval theologians were so intrigued by this question that they came up with what they called "the Seven Deadly Sins." One only needs to review the seven they named to agree that they must be among the most serious of sins: pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lust. It is generally conceded that pride lies at the root of all sins, or that all sins are sins of pride. It is noteworthy that the seven deadly sins are mostly sins of the heart, which are generally believed to be more serious than sins of the mind (understanding), such as being honestly mistaken, and even sins of the flesh, such as adultery.

Our Lord seemed to have been more incensed by the sins of the scribes and Pharisees, such as self-righteousness and hypocrisy, than the sins of the prostitutes. And as shocking as it might be to some he found the sins of Sodom "more tolerable" than the sins of Capernaum (Mt. 11:24).

In 1973 Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a disturbing book on *Whatever Became of Sin?* in which he wrote about corporate sins as well as individual sins. He concluded that it is hate that links all sins, and that sins are by nature self-destructive, supporting the Biblical view that the wages of sin is death. Martin Luther saw sin as a turning away from God and it begins with ingratitude. Like Menninger, Augustine saw animosities as the basic sin, while Reinhold Niebuhr saw pride as the primal sin. Niebuhr referred to the pride of power, knowledge, virtue, and religion. Others name inordinate self-love as the most serious sin.

Since this series is on the Old Testament, I am asking in this installment, what sins matter most in the OT? Even when we limit ourselves to the OT we find that the answers differ somewhat from one part of the OT to the next. In Pro. 6:16 there is a list of seven deadly sins, referred to as "things the Lord hates," which are: a proud look, a lying tongue,

hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness, one who sows discord among brethren.

But in Ps. 15 where the question of who will go to heaven and who will not is answered, there is a different list of major sins, as well as some virtues. The sins are backbiting, doing evil to a neighbor, reproaching a friend, usury, taking a bribe.

It is significant that when Paul makes up a catalogue of sins in Rom. 3:10-18 in order to show that "There is none righteous, no, not one" he draws upon six OT passages to prove his point. The sins he names include: refusing to seek God, unprofitable lives, deceit, cursing, bitterness, murder, no fear of God. John also, when he emphasizes the sin of destroying one's brother (by not loving him), draws upon the OT story of Cain cutting his brother's throat (1 Jn. 3:10-12).

There are several "sin" stories in the OT that not only show which sins God hates most but also reveal the nature of sin. One is the story of Achan in Joshua 6 and 7, which is one of the grimmest stories in the Bible. When Israel conquered Jericho all the city was devoted to the Lord for destruction except Rahab the harlot (Josh. 6:17). All the silver and the gold were to be deposited into the treasury of the Lord (Josh. 6:19). The people were not to take anything in Jericho for spoil (Josh. 6:18).

These instructions were clear. But Achan disobeyed them by taking gold, silver, and an expensive garment for himself. This was discovered when God allowed Israel to be humiliated in a battle against Ai because of Achan's sin. When Joshua brought Achan to account, he confessed his sin in these words: "When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it." For this sin Achan and all his family and his possessions, along with the stolen property, were stoned and burned with fire.

It is intended to be a grim story because sin against God has grim consequences. This was the sin of covetousness, which is one of the basic sins in the OT. Achan's confession explicitly names the sin, "I coveted them and took them." His sin was not simply desiring something that he did not have, which in itself is not wrong, but in desiring something that he had no right to. He also disobeyed God's clear instructions, so it was rebellion against God as well as covetousness. Most all sin in the OT or the NT can be seen either as willful ignorance or rebellion against God.

"Thou shalt not covet" is not only one of the Ten Commandments, but the only one of the ten that moves from outward action to inward thoughts, which lays bare sin's insidious nature. It was only this commandment that led Paul to come to terms with the sin that was

deep within him: “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (Rom. 7:10). In that same chapter he names the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” as the commandment that brought home to him how sinful he really was, leading him to declare, “I am carnal, sold under sin.” It was this commandment, he said in verse 13, that caused him to see that sin is “exceedingly sinful.” He says in verse 11 that sin used covetousness to deceive him, and by it to kill him.

So, covetousness was the sin that “killed” Paul when none other did. This is because one might be able to control his outward behavior when he can’t control his inward thoughts. This was the conflict that raged within him: “I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind (vss. 22-23). This led him to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” His only answer was: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Since it was covetousness that did all this to Paul, we can conclude that he must have seen it as the most serious of sins, or perhaps as the source of all sin. He went on in Eph. 5:5 to say that covetousness is idolatry and in Col. 3:5 that a covetous person is an idolater. It is certain that he saw in covetousness that sin is exceedingly sinful. And he implies in Rom. 7:25 that it is the sin we have to go on dealing with even when we have Christ to help us: “So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

It is understandable, then, that theologians would see in humanity’s first sin the sin of covetousness. It was illicit desire - a craving for power and knowledge that they had no right to—that caused Adam and Eve to sin. It was of course a violation of God’s command, which is rebellion, but its source was covetousness. Gen. 3:6 serves as a good description of covetousness: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” Her sin began by desiring what she had no right to.

It is the sin that “kills” us all, to quote Paul once more, for we are all “sold under sin” when it comes to our inmost thoughts. Covetousness lurks in our church life more than we might realize—an unwarranted desire for power, attention, preeminence, what Niebuhr called the pride of righteousness and of religion. If covetousness is idolatry, as Paul charges, then it means that we make idols of these things, putting them before God.

So, it might not be too much to say that covetousness is *the* sin of the OT, or the source of all other sins. It is unlawful desire that causes one to murder, to steal, to lie, to defraud, to backbite, to fornicate. Cain cut his brother’s throat because he envied his righteousness (1 Jn. 3:12). The sin in building the Tower of Babel was the people’s

inordinate desire for power and influence: “Come, let us make a name for ourselves” (Gen. 11:4).

When it comes to the sins that the prophets condemned the most, which were idolatry, injustice, and breaking of covenant, they still have their root in covetousness. In some cases the Hebrew word that is translated “covet” in the KJV is rendered “unjust gain” in the RSV, as in Jer. 6:13 where the KJV has “everyone is given to covetousness” appears as “everyone is greedy for unjust gain” in the RSV.

In other prophets covetousness is referred to in association with other grievous sins, such as Micah 2:1, “They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.” The prophet goes on to say that it is because of such sins that God devises disaster for his people. In Ezek. 33:31 the worst of sins seems to take the form of hearing but not doing, and even this is related to covetousness: “So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouths they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain (covetousness).”

The meaning of covetousness is seen in its synonyms, such as envy, greed, cupidity, avarice. It is in the form of envy and avarice that covetousness is listed among the Seven Deadly Sins. Like all sin, covetousness enslaves its victim. If money is not our servant it will be our master. If we do not possess wealth it will possess us. Unless we are on our guard in this acquisitive world we will be like Tantalus, the king of Greek mythology, who was doomed in the lower world to stand in water that always receded when he tried to drink, and under branches of fruit that he could never reach. How many there are who are impoverished amidst plenty!

If the OT names the sins that matter most, it also points to the only cure, the grace and mercy of God. The great prophet who cried out against the blackest sins could also say, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Is. 1:18).

That is gospel and it is in the OT.—*the Editor*

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CAUGHT IN THE SMOKE OF OUR OWN CHIMNEY

When I was a boy living in Mineral Wells, Texas, my birthplace, we had a stubborn old fireplace that would sometime, when the wind was contrary, fill our livingroom with as much smoke as went up the chimney. We were often caught in the smoke of our own chimney, and there wasn't much we could do about it

This metaphor, which I borrow from Alexander Campbell, may be applied to things religious, such as the way we think about those we believe to be wrong—"brothers in error" we call them, if they are brothers at all. We are slow to see that we are all in error about some things, for none of us has perfect knowledge. Campbell spoke of those who through no fault of their own seem never able to escape the smoke of their own chimney. We all are sometimes victimized by the chimney's down draft and get caught in the smoke of sectarian strife. Even with help it is sometimes next to impossible to escape the smoke.

Error is of two sorts, intentional and unintentional. When error is intentional it is reflective of a bad heart and is subject to censure from both man and God; when it is unintentional it tends to be forgivable. To put it another way, errors of the heart (conscience) are more serious than errors of the mind (understanding). Many a good man has been mistaken, but if he is truly a good man with an honest heart his mistakes will be unwillful. One with an honest and good heart is never willfully wrong. It is the person with a bad heart and evil intentions that is culpable, deserving; censure from God and society alike.

There are those who cannot escape from the pain of ignorance, poverty, illiteracy, and sectarianism. They would like to escape but the smoke of their privations is too thick.

This episode from George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," later presented on stage and screen as "My Fair Lady," illustrates what I am saying: Pickering: I think you ought to know, Doolittle, that Mr. Higgins' intentions are entirely honorable.

> *Doolittle*: Course they are, Governor. If I thought they wasn't I'd ask fifty pounds.
>
> *Higgins* (revolted): Do you mean to say that you would sell your daughter for fifty pounds?
>
> *Doolittle*: Not in a general way I wouldn't; but to oblige a gentleman like you I'd do a good deal, I do assure you.
>
> *Pickering*: Have you no morals, man?

> *Doolittle*: Can't afford them, Governor. Neither could you if you was as poor as me. Not that I mean any harm, you know. But if Lisa is going to have a bit out of this, why not me too?
>
> *Higgins* (troubled): I don't know what to do, Pickering. There can be no question that as a matter of morals it's a positive crime to give this chap a farthing. And yet I feel a rough sort of justice in his claim.
>
> *Doolittle*: That's it, Governor. That's all I say. A father's heart, as it were.

While we can't see in Doolittle a paragon of virtue, we may be inclined to agree with Higgins that there is "a rough sort of justice in his claim." Being poor had haunted him all his life, too poor to afford the rich man's morals. He has been caught in the smoke of his own chimney. He will not do *anything* for money, such as sell his daughter into prostitution, but he's willing to profit from her good fortune. He is disarmingly honest and free of hypocrisy. The playwright is showing us that poverty and riches give people different perspectives. Might we also conclude that God will judge each of us in reference to the degree that we are caught in the smoke of our own chimney? It is tempting for us to judge others in the light of our own situation in life.

I recall an illustration that my dear friend Carl Ketcherside gave in an address shortly before his death. In his inner-city ministry in St. Louis he had befriended this wino named Gus, who had been a "loser" all his life, a drifter who was never able to put it together. When Carl talked with him about spiritual values, he could only respond that he had tried everything, including religion, but nothing worked. Carl told how they found him in the alley one night not only drunk but frozen to death. He went to the morgue to see his friend for the last time, cold and still in death. I was touched when Carl said, as if he were talking to himself, "I wonder what God will do with old Gus."

It reminded me of how much Carl had changed since we first met nearly 40 years earlier. Back then he would have had no doubt about what God does with drunkards, and he would have had proof-texts. But once he lived among drunks, derelicts, and prostitutes like Jesus did, he was much less judgmental. He learned what Campbell was saying, that some people never escape from the smoke of their own chimney. When we become more like our Lord, we too will not see the world out there in terms of condemning it but of saving it.

Campbell had his own illustration for this which he couched in an imaginary conversation between Martin Luther and a monk named Erastian. The monk asked Luther what he thought had become of his pious parents who had died in the Catholic Church. Luther was confident that not only they but his grandparents as well were all in heaven, for

they were all devout Catholics. “In the name of St. Peter and St. Paul,” Erastian retorted, “why have you raised all this fuss in Germany and throughout the world? Do you expect anything better than to go to heaven when you die?”

Luther conceded that there is nothing better than going to heaven, but that he could not have gone to heaven had he remained in the Roman church. Then how could his parents?, asked the monk. “I have been favored with more knowledge than they,” said Luther. “They lived in conformity to all they knew, and died in the church,” he went on to say, “I live in conformity to what I know, and have left the church.”

Campbell goes on to have Luther say that each person must obey the light that God has given him, and that no one can be justified today by the knowledge that he had yesterday. The greater the light the greater the responsibility. One cannot be saved by living according to the knowledge of his ancestors but by his own knowledge.

Campbell is saying that while Luther’s parents did not escape the smoke of their own chimney, Luther did. Since Luther saw the light more clearly than they he had to do what they did not know to do. He has Luther stating a crucial truth: *As the brain grows the heart should grow.* Here Campbell, under the rubric of an imaginary conversation between Luther and a monk, sets forth a vital Biblical truth, *the principle of available light.* It is a truism that no one can be held responsible for what he does not know and cannot know. He cannot obey what he does not know to obey. The Bible states it well: “It is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor. 8:12). That not only applies to money, which is the subject in context, but to knowledge and understanding as well.

The crucial issue in all this is whether one is willfully or unwillfully ignorant, and we may have to conclude that many are ignorant by choice. This is evident when they disregard what light they have, whether little or much. Paul placed himself in the class of those who were unwillfully ignorant. Even though he had been a persecutor, a blasphemer, and an insolent man, “I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief’ (I Tim. 1:13). Paul was once an unbeliever but not a disbeliever. The distinction is vital. The unbeliever is what he is because he’s caught in the smoke of his own chimney; he doesn’t believe because he’s never heard, never had the opportunity. The disbeliever has received the light and rejected it, which makes him self-condemned. You will find in Scripture that it is always the disbeliever that is condemned, never the unbeliever, even though some translations do not make this distinction as clearly as others.

It was this kind of thinking that led Campbell to his incisive definition of a Christian, which he gave in the now famous Lunenburg Letter: “A Christian is one who believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and

obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will." But this does not satisfy the essentialist who thinks in terms of exact conformity to the ordinance of baptism (immersion). The essentialist tends to neglect the heart and honest intent, while the non-essentialist may minimize the significance of the ordinance. Campbell sought to strike a balance. The penitent believer is of course to submit to every ordinance of God, Campbell is saying, but only according to his understanding of God's will. It is the principle of available light applied.

If Campbell is right, then we can be a Movement with such a slogan as "We are Christians only, but not the only Christians." Since only one percent of the professed Christians of the world have been immersed as adult believers, the slogan has no meaning if 99% are rejected as Christians. While Campbell championed the cause of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, he believed that there were Christians who had not yet arrived at this "measure of understanding." He himself was an example of this. He was immersed as an adult after being sprinkled as an infant, but he believed he was a Christian before he was immersed in that he had always followed Christ according to the light he had.

Such ones are caught in the smoke of traditional infant sprinkling and mistakenly suppose they have correctly conformed to the ordinance of baptism. They may be mistaken, but it is a mistake of the head, not of the heart. They often have more piety and better morals than the essentialist for immersion, Campbell observed, and all through history such ones have often been persecuted for their faith and laid down their lives for the cause of Christ. To say that such ones are not Christians because they may have an imperfect baptism is to imply that the immersionist is perfect simply because he has been correctly immersed. We are all imperfect Christians, Campbell is saying, only in different respects.

And where is the grace of God in all this? If it is a matter of being exactly right, where is the grace? We are not saved because we are in the right church or because we were baptized exactly the right way or take the Lord's supper at exactly the right time or go to church the right number of times. It is by God's grace. When we come to see baptism, not as our exact compliance but as God's act of grace, then we can meaningfully refer to ourselves as Christians only but not the only Christians. It is only God's grace that makes that motto true.

And we will then understand that God's grace takes account of those who are caught in the smoke of their own chimneys. And we will see that that includes us and that we too must rely on that grace that is greater than all our sins.—*the Editor*

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Denomination or Sect? . . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (13)

If the Church of Christ is to be saved for a meaningful ministry in the 21st century it must come to terms with its status as a distinct religious body, to wit, that it is at worst a sect, at best a denomination. This is imperative for one vital reason, self-authenticity. If we are to be a redemptive people in a troubled world we must be an honest people. We can't play such games as "They are all denominations (or sects), but we are not" and have any viable impact upon a lost world. Ministers in other churches are "denominational preachers" while ours are "gospel preachers." All other churches are "sectarian churches" while we are "the church." It is understandable that our neighbors not only see this as arrogant, but it causes them to beg to be excused when it comes to having anything to do with us.

A case in point is a seminary professor's review of one of our publications entitled *I Just Want To Be A Christian* by Rubel Shelly. He describes the overall impression the book made on him in these words:

> At first reading I confess to some indignation at his distinction between "the sectarian churches," by which he means everybody else, and "nonsectarian churches," by which he refers to those "streams" that have emerged from the American Restoration Movement. In fact, the mentality is easy enough to understand: it is exactly the same as that found in the Roman Catholic Church.

The professor went on to explain his comparison between Roman Catholics and the Church of Christ: "Conservative Roman Catholics do not view them-selves as a denomination. They think of themselves as the one, true, holy, apostolic church. For them Christian unity does not have to do with getting denominations together, but on returning to the one, true, holy, apostolic church." He said that this is precisely Shelly's position except that in his case the true fold is the Restoration Movement. The professor goes on to express his astonishment that the Church of Christ could have such "an extraordinarily narrow focus" as to the number of Christians in the world—a view even narrower than conservative Catholics!

The professor could be advised that it is not as bad as he has been led to suppose, for the majority of those in Churches of Christ no longer hold such a narrow view. But they are not being supported by their leaders who continue to parrot the stale party line, “We are not a denomination like all the others.” For many years in this journal I have responded to that claim by asking, if we arc not a denomination what would we have to have to be a denomination that we don’t already have? In one article years ago I stated it in a syllogism:

By definition a denomination is a church with a particular name.

The Church of Christ has a particular name.

Therefore, the Church of Christ is a denomination.

There it is for those who want logic. Case closed.

But there are other recognizable features to a denomination:

It has its own agencies, such as schools, colleges, publishing houses, journals, conventions, missionary programs, retirement plans.

It has its own distinctive clergy, separate from those in other groups.

It has its own definable doctrines.

It has its own history and traditions that set it apart.

It has its own list of churches in a yearbook or directory. (This is considered the one sure sign of a fully developed denomination. Note: the Bible churches have not yet reached this stage.)

The Church of Christ clearly qualifies on each of these points. So, I ask again of our leaders who keep insisting, even in our more liberating books like Rubel Shelly’s, that we are not a denomination: *What would we have to have to be a denomination that we don’t already have?*

It might be argued that we are not a denomination because we have no national headquarters, no ecclesiastical hierarchy. But there are many denominations that are congregational in polity and have no ecclesiastical hierarchy.

There is really no contest. Our leaders know that the Church of Christ is a denomination. They just won’t admit it! Pardon my candor, but it is a case of not being honest with our people. And that is what we have to do to be saved, be honest and cut out the nonsense.

It is more serious than just nonsense, for we actually abuse the Bible in our resolve to avoid calling ourselves a denomination. We take a beautiful term like fellowship, *koinonia*, which in Scripture refers to all those who are in Christ and in "the fellowship of the Spirit," and use it in a narrow, sectarian sense. We say "Our fellowship" when we refer only to Churches of Christ. A flagrant and inexcusable abuse of Scripture! We do the same thing with "the Lord's church" or "the churches of Christ," Biblical terms indeed, but we apply them to only part of the Body of Christ, ourselves only.

But, considering the state of the religious world, we have to have a name if we prevail as a separate church, and we chose Church of Christ, or Daniel Sommer chose it for us back in 1889 when he wanted to distinguish us from the Disciples of Christ or Christian Churches. I don't know that it is all that bad to have a denominational name, considering that the state of things is not ideal, and "Church of Christ" is a good name, a *denominational* name. I am only saying that we should admit it. Go ahead and say it, "Our denomination." It will do your soul good! That is better than resorting to euphemisms and far better than prostituting Biblical terminology. Of course, you can always say "Our movement," one of our more sophisticated euphemisms. Anything but denomination!

Our aversion to that term is of late vintage, for our pioneers realized early on that they had added one more denomination to the world scene and did not deny it, even if it wasn't their intention at the outset. This line from Alexander Campbell might surprise some of our folk:

> We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and cooperate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant" *(Mill. Harb.*, 1840, p. 556).

We, as a denomination! Alexander Campbell! We might have to withdraw fellowship from him for that! Note also that he not only recognized that there were Christians in "other denominations" but that he was eager to cooperate with them. This shows that our exclusivism of having no fellowship with other churches is of more recent date than Campbell's time, only the past one hundred years in fact.

But at the same time Campbell was quick to distinguish between a denomination and a sect, insisting that his people were not a sect. In his debate with Mr. Rice, who accused him of starting another sect, he retorted, "You can never make a sect of us," and went on to emphasize the catholic (universal) nature of his plea for the unity of all Christians, such as a catholic name, a catholic baptism, a catholic plea. The distinction between sect and denomination is vital. One reason we've had such a hang up about denominations all these years may be because we have made it equivalent with sect. One is condemned in

Scripture, the other is not. A sect presumes to be the whole of the Body of Christ, exclusive of all other believers, while a denomination recognizes that it is only part of the whole. Too, a people can be a denomination as a temporary measure, looking for the time when the ideal will obtain and there will no longer be denominations but only the one Body of Jesus Christ.

While the Church of Christ started as a sect back in 1889 in Sand Creek, Illinois when we rejected as brethren even those in Christian Churches, we are today somewhere on the continuum between sect and denomination. If the Mormons are a sect with some denominational characteristics, I would say the Church of Christ is a denomination with some sectarian characteristics. So, it is a worthy goal to keep on being more denominational and less and less sectarian. Our most sectarian trait is our exclusivism. One way to become less sectarian is to admit that we are a denomination! Those people who call all others "sectarian" are almost certainly sectarian themselves.

"A denomination in protest" is a defensible position. We can even say that we are a denomination because we can't help being, and that we don't believe in denominations as the ideal or the final end for the church, and that we will work for that unity that will one day cause denominations "to die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large," to quote another of our founding documents.

I challenge the leadership of the Church of Christ to be as forthright as Mr. Campbell was. Who will be the first to step out and say, "We, as a denomination . . ."? This we can do without surrendering any truth we hold, and it will be an important step toward saving the Church of Christ.—*the Editor*

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THE MOTTO THAT GOT US IN TROUBLE

Where the Scriptures speak we speak, where the Scriptures are silent we are silent. — Thomas Campbell

While Thomas Campbell is not to be blamed for it, this is the motto that got us in trouble. And it continues to get us in trouble. It is the one motto that was original with our pioneers. Others came out of the Reformation, such as "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love." Another popular one was probably adapted from John Wesley's emphasis on being "downright Christians" which our people expressed as "Christians only."

But none of the mottoes, original or borrowed, has blown up in our faces like this one that Thomas Campbell bequeathed to us. It is, unfortunately, the one we've paid most attention to. Others that might have turned us in the right direction we have virtually ignored, particularly Barton Stone's great dictum, "Let Christian unity be our polar star." And there is one that we have blatantly disobeyed: "We are free to differ but not to divide." It is the motto that we all have memorized and practice the most that has boomeranged on us, serving as fodder for our multiplicity of divisions: Where the Scriptures speak we speak, where the Scriptures are silent we are silent.

As to whether we have failed the motto or it has failed us depends on what Campbell meant by it or how we interpret it. Campbell never expanded on what he meant by it. He first introduced it to the Christian Association of Washington, the para-church entity he organized in 1809 when he launched his movement to unite the Christians in all the sects. When it was pointed out that if he followed such a rule he would have to give up infant baptism, he conceded that such might be the case, a decision he finally made. But Campbell never examined the broader implications of his motto as a rule of interpretation, such as whether something is forbidden if it is not expressly stated in Scripture, or if we are authorized to act only "where the Scriptures speak."

Because of what Campbell says in his *Declaration and Address* it is highly unlikely that he intended his motto to be supportive of "blueprint hermeneutics," which underlies all our factions, each of which says of its particular "Issue": *We are being silent where the Bible is silent,* whether it is Sunday school, instrumental music, societies, or the sponsoring church. In that unity document Campbell recognized the principle of unity in diversity, and at one point referred to "the general rule of obedience" that allows for "some variety of opinion and practice." He went on to say that such diversity existed in the apostolic churches without any breach of unity, and that it can be true today.

Strictly interpreted, Campbell's slogan allows for no diversity and demands conformity. If the Bible is silent about a congregation owning property and having trustees, then such is forbidden. No latitude and no room for differences. Where does the Bible "speak" about hymnals, four-part harmony, baptisteries, lesson leaves, loud speakers, overhead projectors, Communion cups, song leaders, pulpit ministers, youth ministers, etc., etc. And we must all believe alike and practice the same on all such issues, for together we are silent where the Bible is silent and we speak only where the Bible speaks. So, we splinter and sub-splinter so that each may be in a "faithful church."

But Thomas Campbell allowed for variety in opinion and practice just as in the apostolic churches, and this without any breach of unity. So he didn't mean by his motto that the church can't adopt useful innovations as required by the progress of culture and

civilization. He himself lived to see his own people organize a missionary society over which his son Alexander served as president, and he offered no objection, even though the Bible is silent about missionary societies.

Then what did he mean by the motto? It has to be interpreted out of his own time and circumstance. The churches were creed-bound, making them tests of fellowship. The motto was intended to convey the principle of having no creed but the Bible: *We do not speak what the creeds of men say, but only what the Bible says.*

In the light of what he said in the *Declaration and Address* about loving and accepting one another even as Christ loves and accepts us in spite of our weaknesses and errors, I am persuaded he meant something more by the motto. By saying "We speak where the Scriptures speak" he meant we will require only what the Bible requires; we will not impose any creed or opinion on you. By "We are silent where the Scriptures are silent" he meant that if the Bible lays down no rule for fellowship we will not. He was saying, in short, that (only) where the Bible binds will we bind, and where the Bible looses (in opinions and methods) we will loose.

When the motto is interpreted legalistically, as it usually is, no one is consistent in following it, for each one "picks and chooses" when he wants to speak and when he wants to be silent. One segment among us is "silent" when it comes to instrumental music but not when it comes to the Sunday school. Another segment is "silent" when it comes to the Sunday school but not when it comes to multiple cups. Another is "silent" about multiple cups but not about grape juice (rather than wine). On and on it goes. We are "silent" when it comes to our party issues, but we have no qualms about "speaking" where the Bible does not speak in areas where another party among us is "silent."

This is why I say the motto doesn't work, not the way we interpret it. It in fact blows up in our faces, dividing us asunder. Thomas Campbell would be horrified that we have taken a motto that he set forth as a unity principle and used it to beat each other over the head. The cry of our many factions has been, "We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where it is silent and you are not, so we are faithful and you are not." Relying on that motto one only needs to ask, "Where do you find in the Bible?" You can fill in the blank according to your own scruple. Blinded by the presumed implication of the motto, we dare not respond with what is obviously the truth, "We do not have to have a Bible precedent for everything the church does. The Bible is not that kind of a book and was never intended to be such a book. If it were it would impede the progress of the gospel in a progressive society."

To illustrate my point I quote from a tract entitled *Unity With Christ and Christians,* written by a sincere minister of the "Conservative" Churches of Christ, who are sometimes uncharitably referred to as Anti's" (We all are Anti about some things!) because of their objection to Herald of Truth and other "church sponsoring" projects. Notice his use of the motto we are discussing. In referring to our pioneers' desire for the "unity of The Divine Standard," he says:

> One preacher who set his heart to this work put it this way, "WHERE THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK, WE SPEAK; AND WHERE THE SCRIPTURES ARE SILENT, WE ARE SILENT." When one man said, "If we adopt *that* as a basis then there is an end to infant baptism," the answer was, "Of course, if infant baptism is not found in Scripture, we can have nothing to do with it." Human practices were abandoned in favor of the ancient order.

The writer goes on to say that by the late 1800's many of our people abandoned this "back to the Bible" position by introducing innovations, and he names them: instruments of music, choirs, centralizing arrangements, social-gospel practices. These caused divisions, he says. Since about 1950, he says, still more innovations came, "wholly unknown and unauthorized in the New Testament." Then he names Herald of Truth, the "sponsoring church," and such human institutions as orphanages and colleges, as well as fellowship halls, picnic centers, and game rooms."

All this is drawn from the presumed soundness of Thomas Campbell's old motto to the effect that we speak only where the Bible speaks and are silent where it is silent. But notice the brother's select list of innovations. He names only those things where he chooses to be silent. His "Anti" Sunday school brother believes that innovation to be "wholly unknown and unauthorized in the New Testament" and so he is silent where our conservative brother speaks. Neither does he mention literature, multiple cups for Communion, grape juice, and baptisteries. On these things he chooses to speak where the Bible doesn't speak. We have "Anti" brethren who are silent on all these things. He names fellowship halls where he elects to be silent but not fellowship vestibules where he chooses to speak. He lists colleges where he is pleased to be silent but not journals for which he writes.

If this is what Thomas Campbell meant, he did us a disservice, for he handed us a rule that no one can practice, not consistently at least. None of us is always silent where the Bible is silent, but none of us always speaks where the Bible speaks. When it comes to footwashing we do not speak where the Bible speaks as do the Seventh Day Adventists. The Dunkard Brethren not only wash feet but practice the holy kiss, all because the Bible

speaks of these things. When we choose not to follow Campbell's motto strictly, we explain it away with, "It does not apply today."

We are slow to see that others who are as sincere and as intelligent as ourselves, and who have the same view of Scripture that we have, come up with a different conclusion. They believe these things do apply! The only answer to this is to allow for such differences and thus preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, like the Bible tells us to. It isn't differences or even innovations that cause divisions, but an unloving, factious spirit.

When a motto gets us in this kind of trouble we had better reexamine it or chuck it, and look for a more reliable hermeneutics. Another of our pioneers, Isaac Errett of the second generation, may provide us a more reliable guideline when he says, referring to what our people are supposed to stand for:

> If men are right about Christ, Christ will bring them right about everything else. We therefore preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We demand no other faith in order to baptism and church membership than the faith of the heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; nor have we any term or bond of fellowship but faith in the divine Redeemer and obedience to Him. All who trust in the Son of God and obey Him are our brethren, however wrong they may be about anything else.

I should emphasize that this is what heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement are supposed to believe. We repudiate our heritage when we make things like organs, methods like Herald of Truth, and opinions like premillennialism bonds of union and tests of fellowship. Errett put his finger on the genius of the Movement: to make nothing a test except faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ according to one's understanding.

And Errett gives us a maxim that might serve as a better slogan: *So long as one is right about Jesus Christ he can be wrong about a lot of other things.* And if this brother who is "in error" (Have we any other kind?) needs to be brought around, Christ will bring him around. We don't have to worry about him, just accept him in forbearing love. That way we don't have to keep score on him. How liberating!—*the Editor*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORMERS

Edward Fudge

Reformers are accused of many things but rarely of being dull. They challenge others to question their traditional thinking and overcome their mental lethargy. I recently spent a day with such a group of reformers, those among us who are concerned about institutionalism in the church. It was anything but dull. My part in the meeting was to discuss "What is the gospel?"

Since reformers are prone to overdo a good thing, I set forth some "Suggestions for Reformers" to these brothers and sisters. Leroy Garrett was present and thought the four suggestions I made would apply to us all, and that his readers would profit from them. You may judge for yourself. Here they are for what they are worth:

1. *Drive out the demons but don't leave an empty house.* Jesus tells a parable of a man who made that mistake. He drove out the demons but left his house empty, only to find himself the landlord of a full house of demons. History is replete with examples of reformers who so stressed one truth that they neglected other and more important truths, such as the centrality of Jesus Christ. When we give Jesus his proper place all other truths tend to fall in place. We should seek balance and avoid extremes, for they tend to neglect the core gospel itself, even when the extremist in his heart really believes the gospel.

2. *To stand up for what you believe you do not have to withdraw from the established church.* Jesus, who worked within the Jewish church, teaches us this. The reformers throughout 2,000 years of history, who worked within the religious' structures of their time, teach us this. Some scholars think that when Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out" (Mt. 24:26), that he was telling them they did not have to join the desert sect of Essenes at Qumran, even if that sect could make a case for rejecting the Jerusalem establishment and starting over.

The problem in starting over is that what you start will also soon need to be reformed. An effort to reform Roman Catholicism resulted in the Church of England. An effort to reform the Church of England resulted in the Methodists. Out of the Methodists came the Holiness movement. Out of it came the Pentecostals. Out of the Pentecostals came the charismatics. On and on it goes. Even in our own Movement one "sound" church leads to another, and it to still another. And wherever we are we all have our sin and error.

3. *Remember that God does not save individuals in isolation but in a covenant community.* He saved Israel from their Egyptian slavery as a group, as a covenant people. The Lord "added together" those that made up the church on Pentecost (Acts 2:47). There is strength in numbers and solace in companionship (Eccl. 4:9-12). Spiritual fruit is enhancing when it is in fellowship one with another (Gal. 5:22-23), but it has little value when one is apart from others. The Lone Ranger might fit the old West but not the New Testament concept of community.

4. *Beware that overstatements and hasty generalizations may be forms of lying.* If a Christian is anything he is one that tells the truth. Reformers may at times need to overstate their case to make a point, but this does not justify lying. We must realize that others respect the Bible as much as we do, and they are as honest and intelligent as we are. Because they disagree with us doesn't mean that they are either ignorant or dishonest. And even when they are in error they probably hold some truth.

In summary, let us make Jesus central in all things, keep doctrine in balance, and make godly living the goal of all our teaching, with sincere faith and brotherly love.—*Box 218026, Houston, Tx. 77218*

There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self. — *Benjamin Franklin*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Ouida has recovered from her recent illness and has been supervising the remodeling job on our home. Even as I make this report new cabinets are being installed in our kitchen, along with new appliances. Our bedrooms have new paint and new carpets, all grey, and Ouida made new drapes to match. She enjoys this sort of thing and has lots of expertise, lining up plumbers and carpenters like an old line foreman. She could run General Motors, and would she ever give the Japanese a run for their money!

In a recent service at the Central Church of Christin Irving (Dallas), Texas two women were ordained as deacons. The church tried this a few years back, but the woman nominees did not receive the necessary 75% of the votes. This time they did. Women also make announcements and read Scripture in public worship. The church believes it has Biblical authority for women serving as deacons.

At the Prestoncrest Church of Christ in Dallas, according to a Denton visitor, the minister stated publicly in a recent Sunday sermon that he was tired of hearing that the only Christians are in the Church of Christ, and he hoped he would never hear it again. Another report from this church tells how an AIDS victim came forward, confessed the sin of his lifestyle, and asked for the prayers of the church. He was afterwards joyously embraced by hundreds. A rare scene for any church, certainly a Church of Christ.

I had the privilege of listening to a tape recording of an address by Prof. Carroll Osborn to the faculty at ACU, which was the first chapter of a book he will soon publish titled *Christians Only, But Not the Only Christians.* In his presentation he said there is no question about whether the Church of Christ will change, but how its leaders will direct the change. The church has been caught in the backwaters of sectarianism, he insisted, and its only escape is by rigorous self-examination. He left some doubt that the church would be able to escape its sectarian past, but if so it would have to be by way of a Christ-centered emphasis rather than issue-centeredness. Instrumental music cannot be a central issue, he ventured, and it never should have been. He called for a critical look at the way we use terms like fellowship, brotherhood, and denomination. We will inform you when his book is available.

On May 23 there is to be a praise march for Jesus by hundreds of thousands of Christians throughout Europe, including Russia, and in at least 90 cities in the U.S. It is not a protest march, but an affirmation that Jesus is the answer to the world's predicament. Such marches draw believers closer together. The blurb for the affair states that "We will never agree on many lesser points of doctrine, but let's come together and show the world that Christ is what matters most!" Shouldn't we in Churches of Christ be ready to march to that drum beat? Ouida and I plan to join a host of Denton Christians who will join the march in Dallas on that day. On the same day 100,000 believers will march through the Brandenberg Gate in Berlin, thousands more will march in Moscow and every other major city of Europe, filling the streets with praise.

Ouida and I will be driving to Austin on April 22 where I will be a guest speaker at the Westlake Church of Christ where my old roommate at ACU is an elder. The following week we will be in Abilene for the 50th anniversary of my graduating class at ACU. It will be a close call to see which has changed the most in a half century, ACU or me. While Ouida did not graduate from ACU but from Texas Woman's University, she will fit into the celebration.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I prize your *Restoration Review.* I have read and re-read the bound volume, *The Hope of the Believer.* I continue to ponder your series on "What the Church of Christ Must Do. . ." and affirm that we must ALL do them. I have wakened in the night smiling over your "Be ye of an harborous disposition." —*Frank S. Smith, Piney Flats, Tn.*

Cecil Hook always has something important to say, and he has the grace to say it graciously as well as pointedly. His name is not Hook for nothing.—*Frankie Marie Shanks, Poplar Bluff, Mo.*

You have left your mark on the Church of Christ, or I should say you have done your part to clean up our act.—*Woodrow Wilson, El Paso, Tx.*

As a physician I have high regard for the care you gave Mother Pitts. I can testify your action was far above the norm, but from what I read and hear the norm is not your goal.—*Dr. Daniel Retzer, Rockford, Il.*

I am sorry to learn that you must cease publication in December, 1992, but I know all good things must come to an end. I have been a subscriber since 1975 and have looked forward to each issue. I am sure the Lord will bless you and Ouida as the years go by.—*Herbert Pollock, Indianapolis, In.*

I was touched by your beautiful tribute to Mother Pitts. I have often thought of you and prayed for you, as my own family was in a similar situation. Only a few days after Mrs. Pitts' death my grandmother, who was bedfast and had to be cared for like an infant, went to be with the Lord. It was a sad time, but, like you, we can rejoice. You have meant so much to me in my Christian walk. May God continue to bless you.—*Cathy Jody, Corbin, Ky.*

I shall miss your monthly visits and your incisive mind, as well as the spellbinding word pictures. —*Walter Jones, Sand Springs, Ok.*

Thanks for "filling my cup"!—*Linda Kelley, Chattanooga, Tn.*

You and brother Carl Ketcherside have been (are) a blessing to me. I, along with many others, am saddened to see the cessation of *Restoration Review*.—*Mrs. Royce Griffith, Forrest City, Ar.*

Since returning home I've thought of the conversations we've had. I've thought of the study which you have prepared and which is due to be published in "The Australian Christian," and I have thought of you as I've read "*Restoration Review*."—*Ken Masterson, Victoria, Australia*

(Our Australian brother is referring to the study guide I prepared for the World Convention of Churches of Christ to be used in their assembly in Long Beach in August. In support of the WCCC it is my understanding that the study guide, called "God's Dominion from Sea to Sea," will also be published by the *Christian Standard* (Independent Christian Church) and *The Disciple* (Disciples of Christ).—*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

There are several new titles issued by Westminster Press that are of special interest. We can supply these at prices stated, which includes postage. Of special interest to preachers is Karl Barth's *Homiletics* in which the famous theologian tells how he thinks Scripture should be interpreted. If you engage in the ministry of God's word you will find this book helpful. $11.95

Another new title is a controversial one, *God Has Many Names* by John Hick. Though a Christian theologian, he argues that a true relationship with God can exist in all of the great religions. $10.95 pp.

Also new from Westminster is *Church Fights*, a title that speaks for itself. It advises on how to manage conflict in the local church. The two authors, experienced in such things, believe that conflict, if rightly managed, can be an opportunity for a church's growth. $10.95 pp.

Attrition in the ministry, often caused by burnout, has reached a crisis point. To help ministers deal with stress and depression, Welton Gaddy has written *A Soul Under Siege.* Himself a victim, the author tells how he went to a psychiatric unit and re-turned to the ministry victorious. $12.95 pp.

Re-Baptism by Jimmy Allen deals with a subject that has been an issue since the days of Alexander Campbell, who adamantly opposed immersed believers being rebaptized. It has especially been a problem among Churches of Christ. Allen, who takes Campbell's position, deals with such questions as to whether one might be "taught wrong but baptized right." $7.95 pp.

We are pleased that many are interested in Carl Ketcherside's life story, published as *Pilgrimage of Joy.* Only a thousand copies were printed, and there might not be a second printing. We will send you a copy for $15.00 pp.

Call Me Blessed by Faith Martin is a study on the place of women in the church that has gone far in causing men and women alike to take a more critical look at the traditional role imposed on women. Her approach is disarming and is permeated with her love for Christ and the Bible. $9.95 pp.

Another book on the role of women is *Woman in the World of Jesus*, written by a man and wife team who explain the woman's role in the church today by explaining woman in the world of Jesus. The authors show how woman was perceived, how she was treated, and how she saw herself. $12.95 pp.

Our supply of back issues is diminishing, but while they last we will send you 14 back issues, selected at random by us, for $5.00 postpaid. We have seven bound volumes that add up to 12 years of this journal for only $70 postpaid. Or you might try only the bound volume for 1989-90, entitled *The Hope of the Believer* at $15.00 pp.

Please consider giving us a lift for our last year by sending us a list of new readers. It will help us survive the year and may prove a blessing to the ones you select. While we do not solicit donations, those who choose to help us are to be informed that *Restoration Review*, in that name, is now qualified for tax-deductible contributions.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 one year (you will receive all the issues for 1992) or renewal $4.20 for the duration (Dec. 1992). In clubs of three or more (Mailed by us) $3.00 per name for the duration or $4.00 per name for all issues for 1992. Foreign: $5.60 for the duration.

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